

# Caregiver Connection

May 2011

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.  
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION

## Foster Care Month and Kinship Caregiver Day

Governor Christine Gregoire has proclaimed May as Foster Care Month and May 18 as Kinship Caregiver Day in Washington. Pictured below are the proclamations:

May is the month when we focus special attention and offer our thanks to those adults caring for children not living in their homes of origin.

This month's Caregiver Connection is devoted to foster parents, relatives caring for children and adoptive children.

This edition features a story written by a late foster father entitled, "Why I Chose To Become a Foster Parent." It also carries some quotes and pictures from children living with relatives. These children entered the 2010 Voices of Children contest, sponsored by the Family Education and Support Network.

In honor of those families who have offered their hearts and homes to give children a "forever family," we have included a link to a story written by Steve Kelley of the Seattle Times about Michael Oher, a professional player adopted by a family in Memphis and the subject of the movie "The Blind Side."



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## Passport to college summits

The College Success Foundation is in the early stages of planning the 2011 Passport to College Summits. The summits are part of Washington State's Passport to College Promise Scholarship Program. This program encourages foster youth to prepare for and succeed in college. Each one-day summit will provide child welfare and education professionals the opportunity to network and increase their knowledge on how to support the educational needs of current and former foster youth. Here are the dates and locations.

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**Eastern Washington** .....Big Bend Community College, May 26<sup>th</sup>  
**King, Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, Island and San Juan counties** .....Edmonds Community College, May 20<sup>th</sup>  
**All other counties** .....Centralia Community College, May 13<sup>th</sup>

**For more information about participating:**

<http://collegesuccessfoundation.org/Passporttocollege>

## College bound scholarships

Has your foster child signed up for the College Bound Scholarship yet? The deadline is fast approaching! 7th and 8th graders who sign a pledge by June 30 of their 8th grade year are eligible.

The College Bound Scholarship provides hope and incentive for foster children and their families who otherwise might not consider college as an option because of the cost.

The amount of the scholarship will be based on tuition rates at Washington public colleges and universities and will cover the amount of tuition and fees (plus \$500 for books) not covered by other state financial aid awards.

All foster children, as well as Washington state low-income students in 7th and 8th grade who sign a pledge by June 30 of their 8th grade year are eligible. Students promise to graduate from high school, demonstrate good citizenship, and seek admission to a college or university. Family income will be re-checked and college admission confirmed after the student graduates from high school. Students aging out of the foster care system will automatically meet the financial qualifications.

Apply online: [www.hecb.wa.gov/collegebound](http://www.hecb.wa.gov/collegebound) or request a paper application by calling: 1-888-535-0747.

## "The Blind Side" hits home

When you plant the seeds that give young people the opportunity to grow, you never know how or when they might blossom.

This story, written by Steve Kelley of the Seattle Times one year ago, speaks to how adoptive parents can give young people the opportunity to blossom. [http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/stevekelley/2011657462\\_kelley21.html](http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/stevekelley/2011657462_kelley21.html)



IN BRIEF

## Early childhood development

FOURTH IN THE SERIES



This edition offers the last of a four-part series on the science of early childhood development from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. This is essential information for foster parents and caregivers regarding issues they may encounter with infants and young children who are placed in their care.

The research provides information on effective early childhood programs and policies that help ensure children have a solid foundation for a productive future.

### According to the Center on the Developing Child:

"Four decades of evaluation research have identified innovative programs that can improve a wide range of outcomes with continued impact into the adult years. Effective interventions are grounded in neuroscience and child development research and guided by evidence regarding what works for what purpose. With careful attention to quality and continuous improvement, such programs can be cost-effective, and produce positive outcomes for children."

Lessons learned from this research show that effective early childhood programs services and programs:

### Among the lessons learned in the research:

- Build supportive relationships and stimulating environments.
- Address specific developmental challenges.
- Distinguish programs that work from those that don't.
- Generate benefits to society that far exceed program costs.

**For more information:**

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu>

## Why I chose to become a foster parent

My first experience with a foster child developed from a friendship with a 15 year old boy who was living in a local group home. He had no family, no home to return to. Thus I saw a need this young man had, and decided to try and fill that need for him. I felt a responsibility to him and to the community to respond to that need. Through the years since that first encounter I have continued to come in contact with young men in need of help. My sixteen foster sons in the past nine years include boys with drug and alcohol related problems, severely mentally and emotionally disturbed boys, boys whose family are in conflict, or have been in trouble with the law, and boys that are experiencing adjustment problems through their teen years, and simply need a time out from the environment they have been in, to allow them to re-focus and direct their lives.

Many of my foster sons experience low self-esteem, poor peer relations and social skills. For many of them, school, the legal system, and authority figures represent a very great threat. Together we work on these issues and the boys learn how to handle their problems in more appropriate ways. Through working with the school system to develop special programs, or working with agencies and individuals acting as helpers, the boys are able to learn alternate ways to deal with life in a positive way.

Through the experience of being a foster parent I have been able to grow, to change, and to understand better the needs of others. I have had the opportunity to develop my own skills and talents, to share my home, and my life in a way that will bring lifelong rewards to me. Rewards come in many forms, seeing these young men make the necessary changes in their lives to make themselves successful. Success represents itself through a boy passing a test in school for the first time, to becoming drug free for the first time in years, and to graduating from college. For these young men, these have been the first experiences of success they have been able to attain.

Rewards are having a foster son as a commissioned officer in the military and being able to share that experience with him. Rewards are having foster sons call and ask you to be with them as they begin a new life in marriage, and to share the excitement and joy of becoming a father themselves for the first time. Rewards are having foster sons that have left your home return for holidays, birthdays, or to spend an evening with you. Or to have them call from distant places just to keep in touch. And to me being a foster parent gives me the reward of knowing that I have had the opportunity to help a young person turn his life around. To help him develop his value system, and to be accepted as the individual he is apart from his actions, at a time in his life when others are doubting him and he is doubting himself, that is my reward.



*In February 2011, Darrell Duchene, passed away at age 64. He was a much-loved member of the Spokane community of caregivers who worked with young people. A foster parent for 35 years, he spent the last 19 years as a staff member at Head Start. Over the years, he had more than 140 boys placed in his care. For several, he became their guardian; and one boy he adopted. He wrote the following words in 1984 and as one person who knew him well said, "his poignant message reminds us why we do what we do."*

## VOICES OF CHILDREN 2010

LILY AGE 5

my Granny has a butfl  
hrt. she seengs me a  
spesol Song. Iluv my  
Granny

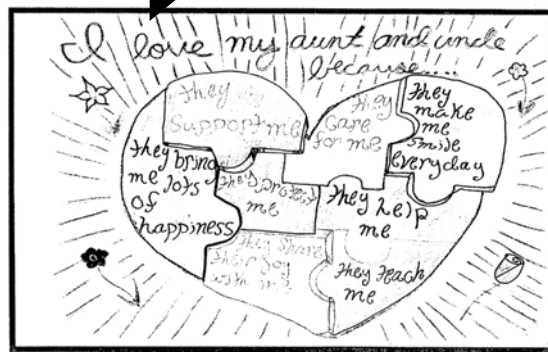
My granny has a beautiful heart.  
She sings me a special song.  
I love my granny.

JOSEPH AGE 7



I LOVE grandma and grandpa. They take us to the grate wolf lodge and stores and skateboard park. I love them in all of my harts. They take good care of us. They are the best grandparents in the world. They keep us safe.

LAUREN AGE 10



NIKKI AGE 7



I love my Aunt and my Aunt loves me. We're as happy as can be. She takes me to the beach and we have fun. All we do is Love, Love Love.



# Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

**Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868**

## ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

**Family Help Line:** 1-800-932-HOPE or [www.parenttrust.org](http://www.parenttrust.org). The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

**Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect:** Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

**Mental Health Crisis Line Information:** The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

## GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State is an all volunteer non-profit association. It is led by experienced caregivers who provide support and helpful services to all caregivers (foster, adoptive, and kinship) in Washington State. In addition, FPAWS advocates for caregivers with Washington's legislative officials, all levels of Children's Administration staff and other community service providers to enhance the child welfare system. Contact FPAWS at [fpaws.org](http://fpaws.org) or 1-800-391-CARE (2273).

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

## RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Girl Scouts of Western Washington: Fostering a Future: [MeccaYS@girlscouts.org](mailto:MeccaYS@girlscouts.org)

Women, Infant and Children Program (WIC):

<http://www.parenthelp123.org/resources/food-resources>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

## CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 2,200 people who have subscribed to the List Serve

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients.

There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.



# Free early learning programs for children birth through age 4

Children in foster care and many children living in relative care are eligible for Early Head Start, Head Start and ECEAP (the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program – pronounced “e-cap”). All children covered by a foster care or TANF grant are eligible, as well as other children living with relatives who have low incomes. Apply as early as you can in the spring or summer, since there is limited space. There is no cost for these programs and you are encouraged to apply!

- Early Head Start (EHS) serves children from birth to age three and their families. The program enhances children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development while supporting parents and guardians in their roles. Many Early Head Start programs provide full day child care.
- ECEAP and Head Start provide half day or full day preschool, health services coordination, and family support and involvement for 3- and 4-year-olds and their families. These programs prepare children for success in school and life.

Learn more about ECEAP, Head Start and Early Head Start at [www.del.wa.gov/care/find-hs-eceap](http://www.del.wa.gov/care/find-hs-eceap) or contact your social worker.

## Taking flight

**For those living in King County:**

Please save the date for *Passages 2011!*

May 25th, 2011

Museum of Flight

- 5-6pm free docent-lead tour of the museum and a college and career information faire
- 6-8pm buffet dinner and inspiring program

Do you have a foster youth who is graduating, aging out of care or going onto college? Please let us know. We'd love for you and them to join us in a celebration of their achievements.

You must RSVP by May 6th to Shaunessy Jones, Treehouse Events Manager, 206-267-5112 or email [events@treehouse-forkids.org](mailto:events@treehouse-forkids.org).

Youth have to register with their social worker in addition to sending an RSVP.